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**U.S. Representative**

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**News Release**

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**Statement of U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)  
Reaction to President Bush's Speech on National Security**

Today President Bush outlined his plans for a national missile defense system that can protect the United States and its allies from ballistic missile attack. He also announced plans to unilaterally cut our nuclear arsenal as a signal to Russia that our missile defense plans should not be taken as threatening them. Finally, he signaled that the U.S. will not long be a party to the ABM Treaty as we know it today.

I support a national missile defense system. I also support reductions in our nuclear arsenal. And I think the ABM Treaty needs a thorough scrubbing and should be updated to reflect today's realities. On the surface, the President's plan has a certain attraction. However, there are several aspects about today's speech that concern me.

First, the President focused on unilateral cuts in our arsenal. Our arsenal is not a threat to U.S. security, but the Russian arsenal is a real threat. And the biggest threat is not a launch of a missile from Russia, deliberate or accidental, but the chance that a hostile nation or a terrorist group can obtain some weapon of mass destruction or build such a weapon from Russian components. One of the great ironies of the post Cold War is that while the threat of nuclear annihilation has receded, the chances of a nuclear detonation on American soil have gone up dramatically.

Our top national security goal should be permanent, verifiable reductions in the Russian nuclear arsenal, and even more importantly, making sure their stocks of highly enriched uranium and plutonium are safe, secure, and accounted for. Unfortunately, while the President talked of the need for comprehensive non-proliferation programs, his budget cuts \$100 million (11 percent) from the Department of Energy's non-proliferation programs and \$20 million (12.8 percent) from State Department non-proliferation programs (excluding the North Korean framework agreement).

Second, while I believe the ABM Treaty should be modified, I am not for walking away from it. As long as Russia has enough weapons to annihilate us, we should be seeking strategic stability with Russia. Even more importantly, we must keep working with cash-strapped Russia to make sure its nuclear components and know-how do not fall into the hands of terrorists or nations hostile to us. If we end the ABM Treaty, we may also end these programs which make sure that Russia's "loose nukes" do not fall into the wrong hands.

The President said the ABM Treaty perpetuates distrust. I disagree. If it did, why do the Russians want the U.S. to adhere to it? The ABM Treaty brings predictability to the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship, keeping the confidence each party has in its deterrent high enough to permit nuclear arms reductions. If this treaty is abrogated, the Russians will not enjoy the same confidence in their nuclear deterrent, and may have no incentive to reduce their arsenal or work with us to ensure that their caches of weapons and fissile materials do not fall into the wrong hands.

Third, the President did not detail what type of system he has in mind that can protect the U.S. and its allies from all ballistic missile attacks, other than to say he has identified promising interim options. What is the technology, will it work, what does it cost? These are fundamental questions that go unanswered in the President's speech. To accomplish his stated aims, the President will likely pursue space-based NMD systems, which are still years or decades away from technological maturity and will be very, very expensive.

Finally, the President's speech did not talk about the budgetary implications of national missile defense. Last Friday, *USA Today* reported that Secretary Rumsfeld plans to ask for \$200 billion to \$300 billion more for defense over the next six years. If we add these increases to the budget the President has already put on the table, we will tap in to the Medicare surplus in most of the next ten years and probably tap into the Social Security surplus as well.

So, we can either spend this money on defense and return to deficit spending. Or we can pare back the President's tax cuts to make sure we do not return to deficits. Or we can pare back Rumsfeld's defense increase. Of the three options, the third is the likeliest. But if we do that, can we afford the President's NMD program, or are we going to have to cut back in other areas of defense spending, such as procuring the V-22, the F-22, the Comanche, or the number of Navy ships? And if we do not trim back procurement items such as these, do we instead cut the number of our forces even when the service chiefs are asking for more personnel, not less? Or do we cut back quality of life initiatives for our troops?

In short, the President's speech raises more questions than it answers. While shielding ourselves from ballistic missiles is an appealing idea, it entails costs and tradeoffs, as do all other weapons systems. The President's speech did not weigh or examine those costs and trade-offs, but they must be weighed before we commit ourselves to a technology that is still unproven or abandon a treaty that has served us well for nearly thirty years. The President has started a worthy discussion. I hope he will reach across the aisle and try to forge a bipartisan consensus on U.S. national security strategy for the coming years.

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